

# W5YI

National Volunteer Examiner Coordinator

## REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable. May be reproduced providing credit is given to The W5YI Report.

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## FCC CLARIFIES HANDICAP EXAMINATION POLICY

The Commission has rejected three petitions for reconsideration of last December's decision to exempt severely handicapped amateurs from the 13 and 20 WPM Morse code requirements. The FCC has not yet issued the full text of its decision. We have learned, however, that the FCC for the first time clarified the term "severe handicap" as a disability that extends for more than 365 days after the certification.

### *Background*

The FCC is known to have changed its longstanding policy against code waivers when President Bush and other high-level policymakers became interested in the code requirements. This happened after a handicapped amateur wrote to King Hussein of Jordan (who holds the amateur call sign of JY1) and the monarch corresponded with Mr. Bush. The American Radio Relay League was critical of the FCC's proposed system of exemption, outlined in PR Docket 90-356.

The announcement comes at a time when some amateurs are thought to be asking for exemptions based on handicaps that do not interfere with telegraphy. The FCC does not make medical diagnoses; it will exempt disabled amateurs from the higher (13 and 20 wpm) speed telegraphy requirements if it receives the necessary doctor's documentation of the severe handicap.

The beginning 5 wpm Morse code requirement cannot be waived, however, since international requirements require telegraphy knowledge when the operation takes place under the 30 MHz level. VE's are required to "accommodate" severely handicapped examinees at the 5 wpm level - even to the point of accepting a sending test for code receiving, or just identifying all 43 characters.

In comments on the docket, ARRL contended that the certification statements obtained from physicians could be executed by physicians who do not appreciate their importance or purpose.

The FCC only permits Medical Doctors (M.D.) and Doctors of Osteopathy (D.O.) to certify an examinee for code credit towards the General, Advanced or Extra Class license. The examinee must sign a release that permits disclosure to the FCC the medical information pertaining to the person's handicap. The physician is permitted to receive compensation for the certification as a medical service.

### *Petitions for reconsideration*

The American Optometric Association argued that the FCC's definition of physician (M.D.s and D.O.s only) is "...arbitrary and capricious and without plausible support in the rulemaking record." AOA believes that optometrists should be included in



the definition, so they may attest that an individual can't pass the exam because of blindness or vision impairment.

"It appears that the rulemaking staff has gone outside of the rulemaking record to consult with the American Medical Association (AMA), which appears to have furnished the definition of physician which the Commission has uncritically adopted," AOA said "This is particularly troublesome because the Commission has adopted a restrictive definition arguably most beneficial to the parochial interests of the AMA membership."

It points out that other federal regulations permit optometrists to render medical opinions related to vision. The association did not explain how visual handicaps interfere with passing the telegraphy exams. The FCC did not change its definition of physician.

**David B. Popkin/W2CC** of Englewood, N.J. requested that the FCC issue uniform criteria for granting the waiver for physicians nationwide. The FCC has issued a two-page information sheet for physicians (Fact Sheet PR-5000 Number 205), but it has not listed the disabilities that would qualify for waivers.

Fact Sheet No. 205 explains that a "...physician should execute a certification only when the nature of the individual's handicap is so severe as to prevent the passing of a 13 or 20 wpm telegraphy examination even where special accommodative procedures are used" such as writing for a blind person or the use of vibrating surfaces and flashing lights.

Popkin noted that FCC rules do not require that the handicap be permanent. "A broken writing arm could result in a perfectly legal certification at the time even though the individual will be cured in a short time," Popkin said. The FCC added to the rules a requirement that, "...to be considered for the purposes of being exempted from the higher speed Morse code requirement, the disability must extend for more than 365 days beyond the date of the certification."

**Dennis C. Brown** (call sign unknown) of Arlington, VA found numerous faults with the exemption decision. His key argument was that if demonstration of code skill is necessary to protect the public interest, then it should not be waived for any applicant. On the other hand, he argued, if the public interest does not require that applicants demonstrate proficiency, then there is no valid reason to maintain the requirement for any applicant.

"(W)ithout considering, by fact and reason, whether the public interest would be served by permitting unqualified persons to share access to a certain congested portion of the public spectrum, the Commission determined that a person who cannot pass a necessary test need not do so," he said. This

is akin to exempting blind persons from the driver's license vision test because their blindness prevents them from passing the test, he indicated.

He suggested that the FCC could have issued a higher class license to the disabled applicant, restricted to those bands not allocated for high speed Morse code. Brown also said the FCC failed to explain the changed facts or circumstances that would warrant reversal of its earlier, no-waiver policy. He said that ITU regulations require demonstration of ability to send and receive Morse code, but the FCC's position is merely that the examinee "know" the telegraphy characters.

"The Commission should either determine that protection of the public interest requires all applicants to demonstrate a certain level of Morse code proficiency, or it should prevail upon the ITU to allow the United States to withdraw the Morse code requirement for all," he said. Nevertheless, Brown's petition was denied.

## Doctor certifications

Another issue that is in the process of being resolved is the FCC requirement that an original "Physician's Certification of Disability" and "Patient's Release [of medical information] Form" be submitted whenever a licensed amateur applies for an exemption of the higher speed telegraphy examinations. Disabled amateurs are objecting to the need (and expense if they have to pay for another doctor visit) to submit another (original) certification at the 20 words-per-minute level when they have already been approved for a 20 wpm exemption when they upgraded to the General class which requires 13 wpm telegraphy proficiency.

The present Form 610 application handling for a severely handicapped amateur applying for an exemption is for the VE's to credit the disabled applicant with the 20 wpm examination element. This is accomplished when the VE team marks an "H" (for handicapped) on the Form 610 under exam Element 1(C) and attaches the (original) certification form.

Unlike the previous waiver system where the FCC had to make a decision on granting the telegraphy credit, the exemption is automatic when the VE team attaches the original doctor certification. Disabled licensees with certified severe disabilities also may begin using their new privileges immediately without waiting for their upgraded license to arrive indicating that the FCC has made a decision on their *Request for Waiver*.

General Class disabled amateurs are now objecting to their having to obtain another original certification when they upgrade again to the Amateur Extra

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Class which requires 20 wpm code proficiency. At least one handicapped amateur has written his congressman.

They maintain that they already have been credited with Element 1(C) and contend that a *Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination* should be completed **which does not expire**. Present Part \$97.505 Rules do not provide for CSCE credit beyond a 365 day limit. The FCC is now in the process of addressing this condition and VECs have been told that a decision will be forthcoming shortly on proper administrative handling.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR TOWER LIGHTING

Our FCC contacts brought our attention to an article that appeared in a publication of the *Society of Broadcast Engineers* (SBE). Although directed to broadcasters, this information is important to amateurs because many clubs rent repeater antenna space on towers owned or used by broadcast stations.

Who is responsible for monitoring tower lights to be sure they are working properly? FCC rules allow licensees or permittees sharing a tower, which is required to be lighted or painted, to designate one licensee to be responsible for the lighting and painting. If the agreements are in writing and on file at each station, then the designated licensee is solely responsible for conforming to the FCC requirements.

However, if the designated licensee defaults in his duties, the FCC will hold each licensee individually responsible until a new designated licensee is appointed. That means that if the lights are out, and the necessary steps following an outage are not taken (such as notifying the FAA) the FCC could conclude that the designated licensee had defaulted on its duties.

Every licensee on the tower could then receive a *Notice of Apparent Liability*. That could happen even if the licensees have written copies of the agreement that another licensee assumes sole responsibility for the tower.

According to the article an FCC official informally stated at a conference session that these rules might need to be revised. But until they are changed, repeater trustees should be aware of the division of responsibility for the towers they may share with others.

• A rather lengthy article appearing in the July 28th Los Angeles Times newspaper says that five year old **Veronica Harrington, KB6TQR** of Long Beach, California, "...is possibly the **youngest licensed ham operator in the United States.**" A photo shows her operating her father's ham radio set.

## JULY VE PROGRAM STATISTICS

<u>July</u> <u>No. VEC's</u>	<u>1989</u> <u>*18</u>	<u>1990</u> <u>*18</u>	<u>1991</u> <u>*18</u>
<u>Testing Sessions</u>	<b>414</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>711</b>
<u>VEC</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
W5YI	45.4%	43.4%	44.0%
ARRL	36.5	29.0	37.7
CAVEC	5.6	6.4	5.3
DeVRY	4.6	5.4	3.9
Others (14)	7.9	15.8	9.1
<u>Year-to-Date Sessions</u>	<b>3162</b>	<b>3546</b>	<b>4427</b>

<u>Elements Administ.</u>	<b>6996</b>	<b>7617</b>	<b>13754</b>
<u>VEC</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
ARRL	45.4%	40.7%	43.8%
W5YI	28.6	35.2	36.7
CAVEC	10.2	8.7	6.0
DeVRY	3.8	4.0	3.3
Others (14)	12.0	11.4	10.2
<u>Year-to-Date Elements</u>	<b>58929</b>	<b>63898</b>	<b>97599</b>

<u>Applicants Tested</u>	<b>4282</b>	<b>4713</b>	<b>8392</b>
<u>VEC</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
ARRL	45.9%	40.8%	44.5%
W5YI	30.8	35.2	36.8
CAVEC	9.6	7.2	4.9
DeVRY	3.2	4.6	3.5
Others (14)	10.5	12.1	10.3
<u>Year-to-Date Tested</u>	<b>35028</b>	<b>38947</b>	<b>58671</b>

<u>July</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
Pass Rate - All	62.7%	60.9%	66.6%
Applicants/Session	10.3	9.4	11.8
Elements/Applicant	1.6	1.6	1.6
Sessions Per VEC	23.0 (*)	27.8	39.5

## Administrative Errors by VEC's/VEC's

<u>July</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>
Defect. Applications	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Late Filed Sessions	0.2%	1.6%	1.8%
Defective Reports	0.5%	0.2%	0.8%

(\*) **Note:** The FCC previously considered ARRL, W5YI and DeVry to be 13 VEC's each since VEC's initially were appointed on a regional basis. Since any VEC may now coordinate examinations in any region, the FCC reduced the number of VEC Regions (62) to VEC Organizations (18.) We have adjusted 1989 figures to reflect this change.

In July 1991, there were 80.5% more exam elements administered to 78.1% more applicants at 42.2% more test sessions than in July 1990.

[Source: Personal Radio Branch/FCC; Washington, D.C.]



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## HAM RADIO AND THE ATTEMPTED SOVIET COUP

On August 22, 1991, The W5YI Office received a FAX from **Dick Ehrhorn, W4ETO**, who owns *Ehrhorn Technological Operations, Inc.* ...the firm that manufactures the Alpha line of amplifiers. Dick retransmitted a handwritten FAX to me that he had received overnight from **Gene, RA3AA** in Moscow. It read:

"ATTN: Richard Erhorn, W4ETO. Dear Dick, I send you the FAX from Russian Prime Minister office. We win! Mr. Gorbachov back in Moscow. Our special emergency station R3A still operates from "Russian White House." Equipment: IC-726 and Alpha 76. Photos will be! 73! Gene, RA3AA."

It was the first word that Dick had heard from his friend in Moscow since the attempted overthrow. I decided to call Dick (who I reached on vacation in Minnesota) to find out more about amateur radio's involvement in the attempted coup.

I had heard that Russian President Boris Yeltsin was rallying the Soviet people from his Parliament building outpost against the Red Army by ham radio! An underground radio station called "Moscow Echo" broadcasting from inside was also rumored to be the same R3A ham station. Gorbachev had no communications whatsoever. All phone lines at his Crimea vacation compound had been cut.

### Phone call with W4ETO

Dick told me that **Gene/RA3AA** "...is a business partner of Walt - both of them are friends of mine, but **Walt UV3GM** ...Valery is his Russian name, is really our close contact. These are guys ...Walt in particular - that I met on the air about a year ago and got to know better. It came about sort of by accident. I worked them one day last October just messing around. He said, 'I know who you are!' It turns out that the guy has an Alpha. We talked and it turned out that he (Walt) speaks good English.

"We found out that he and Gene/RA3AA and two other partners had started a private business in Moscow about this time last year as the Soviet government was loosening up a little on private businesses. ...a private business to import communications equipment and computers.

"Walt is a digital systems and software specialist who had been head of the electronic data processing branch of Moscow University for about ten years. His partner Gene, who wrote that FAX is still the senior researcher in digital techniques at Moscow University.

"After staying in touch with him for some months on the air, my wife and daughter took a trip to Russia. We went over this past June and spent about two and

a half weeks. Walt stayed with us the entire time. We took a river cruise that was set up for Russian businessmen ...virtually all of whom still work for the state.

"The cruise was organized to bring together American businessmen, financial type and entrepreneurs ...to try and transmit a little bit of information and knowledge about free enterprise and business techniques to Russians who in many cases manage state industries. Virtually everything is state owned ...it boggles the mind when you get over there. You don't realize the extent to which the state owns, operates, and guides everything. The managers ...even those supervising three of four thousand employees work for the state and have no concept whatsoever about competition, pricing, margins, profits, sales promotion...

"Walt, Gene, another partner **Peter UA3AOC** and an East German ham with a Y28 call, set up a communications business last year. Walt said they passed out 20,000 pieces of literature about their business at a trade fair in Moscow. It fascinated me, because it is the first contact I had ever had with anybody related to private business in the Soviet Union. Peter was involved in ham radio support of the Ski Trek to the North Pole ...and also participated in a wooden sailboat DXpedition to Svalbard in the Arctic Ocean a couple of years ago.

"Walt took the cruise hoping to learn something about business practices. Although we had a business visa for the trip, we were able to stay in a private flat close to Gorbachov's official residence. The owner's gave us permission [to stay], but was not there at the time. We were on the sixth floor of an apartment house surrounded by people who didn't speak English. It was an unusual experience.

"We talked business and Walt, Peter and Gene brought in **Leo, UA3DR** who is also very active on 20 meters. We had meals with them in private restaurants which are a world apart from those for the general public. Anything you hear about lines and the difficulty in getting goods and shopping is true ...and probably understated.

"We cruised through a river and canal system which I did not even realize existed. They have a maze of canals and locks built at the time of the Czars. Walt even got official authorization to operate maritime mobile using the call RA3CC - which happens to be very close to their company name ...*Radio Communications and Computers*. So we had a maritime mobile station on the river boat ...actually a 400 passenger ship. Propagation was terrible but we managed to work back to the states a few times.

"In Leningrad, Walt contacted **Jacob UA1FA** and another friend and we had another feast in one of their homes ...and a chance to talk ham radio and politics.

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Jacob is a retired electronics design engineer at a military electronics company and is well known throughout the Soviet Union because he has published some 35 transceiver and amplifier construction projects in Soviet publications or privately. Many Soviet hams have built equipment that he had designed. I saw some of his work and they were excellent considering the extreme difficulty in getting parts.

"Walt took us to all the places that not every tourist gets to see. We went to Kruchev's grave in a monastery graveyard in Moscow and just around the corner was the grave of amateur **Ernst Krenkel RAEM**. He was famous for his participation in a Russian polar expedition as a radioman back in the 20's. He was named a hero of the Soviet Union and allowed to use the RAEM call letters of the expedition ship which sank as his amateur call sign ...unusual since there is no numeral. He was given credit for the saving of many lives by maintaining communications during the disaster. Krenkel has quite a large monument with his ham call in a cemetery that is not open to the general public. I had worked him on the air ...he died only within the last ten years.

"The Central Radio Club (Box 88) seems to be some sort of a para-governmental operation. They use it to provide some of the administrative, monitoring and enforcement services involving amateur license issue and suspension. Russian hams used to be prohibited from getting QSLs sent direct. It was the Central Radio Club that was instrumental in getting licenses pulled when they were caught. The Central Radio Club appears to be some sort of a government enforcement arm that does not always work for the benefit of the hams. Its activities are very vague.

"Walt UV3GM is the guy that wrote the current revision of the Russian ham regulations. He was given the ground rules by the telecommunications officials. He told me that after he wrote the regulations, the Central Radio Club looked them over and added its input and modification. The final revision was made by the Ministry of Communications.

"The Soviet Union has just authorized CB radio at 27 MHz ...AM and FM. One of Walt's businesses is importing and modifying transceivers to Soviet regulations. Their power limit is lower so they are doing the technical mods so the radios meet Soviet specs. They are also selling and distributing them ...mostly to commercial radio state customers since there are very few private citizens who can afford anything imported from the west.

"The currency situation is very serious. The ruble was worth about 3.7 cents when we were over there and has dropped since the crunch. The average Soviet salary is around 200 to 300 rubles a month ...which

is around ten dollars. The only ones that can afford western goods are those who have some sort of a business that brings them western currency. No one can afford to buy commercial ham gear. The Alpha (ETO amplifier) they have come from a flea market in western Europe.

## *Ham radio involvement*

"The main contact with them since the coup attempt was the FAX I sent you a copy of. This was my first indication they were fine and that there was no problem. I had talked to Gene on the telephone about one hour after the coup occurred on Sunday night at 0400 GMT - Monday morning in the Soviet Union. Neither he nor I knew about the coup. My perception is that except for those people who were in the middle of Moscow and near the Parliament building, life and business went on pretty much as usual. The disruption really appeared [to be] pretty minimal.

"There was a significant news clip on both CNN and ABC television Wednesday night about the ham station operating from the Russian White House which is the Russian Federation Parliament building where all the TV pictures came from with all the tanks outside. Boris Yeltsin was actually shown transmitting on the ICOM ham radio.

"A paragraph in the *Wall Street Journal* of August 21st said 'Mr. Yeltzin's efforts to rally support are still being hampered by a lack of communications with the nation. So far his aides have been broadcasting news to ham radio operators on a makeshift short wave transmitter installed in the sixth floor of the Russian parliament.' CNN and ABC got in there and photographed it the same night ...Wednesday night showing Yeltzin using the mike. I had no idea until I got the FAX from Gene that our equipment was involved. The R3A call sign sounds like a special event call. R is the standard prefix, and Moscow is 3 - sort of reminds me of JY1.

"I have tried several times to call Walt, but I was not able to get through. I don't know if it is because the lines are tied up ...or cut off. The one thing the coup leadership did right was to first take over the main telephone building in Moscow. I suspect a lot of their outside lines were cut off. Normally I am able to get through to Walt or Gene within fifteen minutes.

"There is a picture of Gene/RA3AA in the current issue of *The DX Magazine* published by Chod Harris. He is in the photo of the group that went to Afghanistan.

"Just before the coup we had been working to get Walt over here on a business trip to talk to some of the manufacturers over here and to look at further



business possibilities.

"Dale Green VE7SV, a well known DXer in Vancouver works for Air Canada. Dale was in the Soviet Union for about three weeks and was due to fly out of Moscow on the August 20th. He was with Walt UV3GM in Moscow for three or four days before that. I do not know when he got out. I worked him from RB5JZ in the Ukraine ...not too far from where Gorbachov was on vacation in the Crimean. Dale was with Walt when the coup broke and was due to fly home the next day.

"Also there was a group of Lutheran clergymen of which my good friend was one, **W0AIH, Paul Bittner** from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Paul flew to Riga (Latvia) and landed about 12 hours before the coup took place. There were major implications in Riga ...surrounding of the parliament and so forth. The last thing I heard was that they were operating from LY2WC on the air ...trying to figure out how they were going to get out of Latvia.

"They were scheduled to fly into Moscow on Tuesday (August 20th) and Walt UV3GM was going to meet them at the airport and show them around Moscow for a day or so and then they were heading to Siberia to visit UA9OS and UL7QF ...several big DXers in the asian area. They had about a two and a half week tour scheduled at a variety of soviet ham stations and churches. I don't know where they are.

## Phone conversation with W0AIH

We talked with Bittner on Saturday, August 24th. He had only returned from Riga, Latvia through Kallin, Estonia at 1:30 a.m. that morning! He told us "This [trip] was to be a mission of four churchmen into the Soviet Union. I was licensed to operate UV3GM, UA9MA, UA9OS and UL7QF. I was to return on the 3rd or 4th of September. We flew to Helsinki and got to Riga last Sunday. Everything was nice and peaceful. Some of our church group in Lativa met us at the airport. We are helping them put in a seminary. They have no ministers. They had all been shot or sent to exile in Siberia decades ago.

"That same evening LY2WW, a contest station [operator] in Lithuania had flown in to Riga to meet me and we talked to about ten o'clock at night. At this point there was no information at all ...no television, no radio. No one knew anything about what was going on. The previous night (Sunday, Aug. 18) we had seen little groups of military personnel outside our hotel ...some with machine guns. I thought they were watching over our big Intourist Hotel which also houses the local KGB headquarters.

"While I was visiting at the radio club in Riga the

other three along with me had seen rocket fire in the distance ...out by the airport. They had heard gunfire. I was oblivious to all of this since I was tucked away at the ham station listening for the U.S.

"I got back to my room about midnight. About 1:00 o'clock I couldn't sleep ...I heard all sorts of strange noises outside. I said, 'my gosh, there are tanks out there ...and troop carriers. 'My goodness, what does this mean? We did not know what was going on. Some troops on the tanks were waving up to their [KGB] friends up on the top floor where they had all of the electronic surveillance equipment.

"The next morning, Monday, the bishop of our church got a telephone call from **Walt/UV3GM** in Moscow telling us 'Do not come, there has been uprisings in Moscow. Suggest you sit tight ...keep low, keep inside. Stay where you are.'

"We had no idea what was going on. No media, nothing. The only information we had was the same information Gorbachov had ...a short wave radio listening to the BBC ...a little portable that one of the guys had taken along.

"I have never seen a town blockaded so much ...tanks around the parliament building. Tanks guarding the bridges in and out. The airport and railroad station closed. Obviously the people who put the coup together felt they had to do that.

"I did operate my station clandestinely one day on Tuesday morning. **YL1WC, Serge** came by as he said he would pick me up by taxi cab at seven o'clock. I had visited him the night before. The other guys didn't think I should go, but Serge did not know what was going on. He didn't have short wave.

I went over to his station and I heard a W2 in New York. He called my wife and I told her about the rocket fire and the tanks. I felt ill at ease there, because I didn't have a license but Serge said it was O.K. I worked a couple of my friends and told them a little bit about the tanks ...I didn't want to say a lot, because I am their guest and I didn't want to get locked up. I was sure that place [Intourist hotel] was bugged. We never talked about anything that would disclose important information. We were very uncomfortable. It was their [KGB] headquarters and we were their guests ...for which we were paying one hundred bucks a night per person.

"The next morning I could have gone, but now there are more tanks and military all around and I am not about to go down to the [ham] station because there were guards at our place ...which Serge had gotten me by [the first time] speaking Russian.

"So we just sweated it out. We can't go out ...we don't know what is happening. I really was out of touch. We had nothing. We had a translator who



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could translate Russian and German, but there was nothing to translate. We found a television set at the hotel and asked if they could get CNN. They said 'This is a good country. We don't need CNN and they glared at us.'

"Had it not been for UV3GM and his message just before the telephone wires were cut and our listening to our short wave [tuned to the] BBC we would not have known anything. We would have seen the tanks and the armed soldiers, heard the gun shots ...but not known what it really meant. It is amazing just how in one fell swoop they can cut everything ...close the airport, close the media, close communications.

"They didn't last long, but who knew when it all started. We were watching from the sixteenth floor. They came by with some sort of carrier ...looked like a tank without a gun and a great big speaker on top. They were talking Russian. Our translator was telling us 'You are to stay in. No pictures. No video.' We had two video cameras with us.

"We heard nothing via amateur radio regarding the coup. I was only working the U.S. when I was at the club station. There were no Russians on talking about it.

"We tried to get out but everything was booked to Germany, we couldn't get out by Germany. We were told don't go to Moscow. Aeroflot wasn't flying out of Riga. So we found a train to Kallin, Estonia - a port city - that left at midnight and the church people stayed with us till the train went. The train door locked after we got on and we were really uncomfortable. We got a plane out of Estonia.

"Dick (Ehrhorn/W4ETO) knew I was going over and had put together an electronic tool and radio hardware kit ...some diodes, also a ham radio vanity license [car] plate ...as a real conversation piece for me to bring to Moscow. I also had various souvenirs ...lipstick for the ladies, little "Hot Wheel" cars for little boys and things for little girls ...things to give away. ...I filled up the rest of my weight [allowance] with bibles.

"I didn't want to bring all that stuff back home again so I stashed them at church headquarters over there in three boxes and told them that when things calm down, either Walt can come and get them or when you go to Moscow you can deliver them. I also had picked up a 240 volt soldering iron in Helsinki to go with 2 pounds of good rosin core solder that Dick had sent. I will be happy once Walt gets the things. For now they are stashed in our church office in Riga.

"I am home ...and I am glad to be home. I might go back next May to finish the job we did not get done this time.

*[Sorry for making this so long, but I thought these were two interesting telephone calls. Fred/W5YI]*

## AMATEUR RADIO RECIPROCITY WITH MEXICO

### Background - Chapter 1:

We told you in our Aug. 1st issue that Mexico had agreed to go forth with a formal reciprocal amateur operating arrangement with the U.S. We also said the announcement was "cryptic" since (1.) there were no details in the FCC bulletin which they said would be forthcoming, (2.) an informal reciprocal arrangement with Mexico had been in effect for some time (3.) the original agreement to go forth with a formal arrangement was actually made some four years ago and (4.) the FCC generally does not publish the reciprocal amateur operating guidelines of other nations. It is up to the amateur community to contact the licensing authority of the country in which amateur operation is desired to obtain these instructions.

### Background - Chapter 2:

We said in our Aug. 15th issue that the reciprocal licensing arrangement with Mexico was a result of a July international telecommunications meeting held in Maryland. Mexico agreed it was time to go forth with a formal arrangement in accordance with the 1987 Lima Convention. Mexican officials were to forward the instructions to the U.S. State Department (actually the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City) by which U.S. citizens could apply for operating authority in Mexico.

### Chapter 3:

A document detailing the procedures for obtaining a Mexican amateur radio license arrived this past week from Bill Jahn, Deputy Director in the Office of International Radio Communications, U. S. Dept. of State, Washington, DC. As we were previously notified, the instructions were in Spanish.

We made a preliminary translation of certain portions and then sent the entire document to Radioscan Magazine in Miami, Florida for a more thorough translation. Radioscan publishes both a Spanish and English ham radio publication - and translates one to the other. We do know enough, however, to tell you that the procedure is certainly more complicated than at first anticipated!

Initially we were told that the procedure ideally should be "...in line with the arrangement we have with Canada." Nothing could be further from the truth. Licensed Canadian and U.S. amateurs may simply operate in the neighboring country without further permission or paperwork. You simply append your call sign with the prefix of the other country. W5YI operating in Toronto would simply be W5YI/VE3. See §97.5(d)(6) and §97.119(f).

It appears to obtain a Mexican reciprocal amateur



operating license you must:

- (1.) Complete an Application for Reciprocal Permission of Amateur Service Operation. This form must be sent through the mail to the S.C.T. (Secretary of Telecommunications) in Mexico City - 60 days before the planned operation.
- (2.) The first part of the form requests information from your present U.S. amateur operator license such as name, U. S. mailing address, call sign, and license class.
- (3.) You are also asked to advise your nationality, birth date, place of birth, and time period/place of amateur radio operation in Mexico.
- (4.) You must agree to abide by Mexican amateur communications law.
- (5.) You must pay a fee of \$181,000 pesos (about \$60.00) payable to the National Bank of Mexico (BANAMEX Sucursal No. 378, folio 403 of Mexico to account No. 605080-3 Secretary of Communications and Transportation. This fee is in effect during the trimester, July-August-September. The amount of the payment may change for the next trimester.

In addition, the 31 page document from Mexico City contains:

- (1.) Fifty-five "Articles" from the Mexican Amateur Radio Regulations and;
- (2.) The amateur frequency bands authorized in Mexico. Precise duplex channels are specified in the 222-225 MHz and 433-438.275 MHz bands. There are four license classes - Amateur Class I and II, plus Novice and Restricted. Class I are authorized (all bands/modes) at a maximum of 1,250 watts; 500 watts above 144 MHz. Class II (all bands/modes); 500 watts, 200 above 144 MHz. Novices (all bands): 150 watts on CW and SSB; 45 watts on FM. Restricted (all bands above 50 MHz): 50 watts on AM/SSB; 45 watts on FM.
- (3.) Twelve "Articles" from the Inter-American Telecommunications Conference (CITEL) that took place in Lima, Peru in 1987.

We will let you know if the complete translation has further information of interest.

- **Still vs. Michaels:** Joe Michaels, W4DDV of Tucson, Arizona, is being sued on four counts by his next door neighbor who is a self-employed consultant geologist. Arthur Still's initial complaint was that he objected to the ugliness of Michaels' tower ...and the fact it obstructed his scenic view of the mountains.

Still now contends that Michaels' amateur operation interferes with his electronic devices; namely his telephone, computers, radio receivers, television and FAX machine ...and his right to conduct a business from his residence. He maintains that Michaels' transmissions constitutes a nuisance.

Furthermore, the plaintiff believes that the valuation of his property has been reduced by 15% to 20% due to the installation of W4DDV's radio tower and antenna and the electro-magnetic interference generated by his ham station. They ask for damages of not less than \$30,000 to be determined by trial.

The third count involves what Still says is the health hazard caused by the on-going exposure to electro-magnetic fields radiated by the ham station next door.

The fourth charge is against the Federal Communications Commission who "is vested with regulation control of radio devices..." Still says the FCC has failed to take action within its administrative authority to regulate interference.

Actually the FCC has taken action. They made unannounced inspections of the Michaels' amateur radio installation on two separate occasions and found there were no violations of FCC regulations ...and no technical deficiencies of any kind.

Reportedly, Still has consistently refused to permit the FCC to enter his premises to determine the nature and extent of interference or other problems and FCC Engineer John Glenn of the Douglas, Arizona, field office has closed the case. Still responded by filing suit in U.S. Federal Court for the District of Arizona on August 19th.

This case has serious ramifications for all of ham radio! Michaels' legal costs have already exceeded \$10,000 and he needs all the help he can get. (Joseph Michaels, W4DDV, 6830 Camino Fray Marcos, Tucson, Arizona 85718)

- **AMSAT's N4HY, Bob McGwier** is making excellent progress towards returning DOVE's voice to the amateur satellite airwaves. Bob is uploading new voice operating software and telemetry shows the spacecraft is in good health. DOVE's downlink frequency is 145.825 MHz. AMSAT will hold this year's annual meeting at the Los Angeles Holiday Inn on November 8-10. Symposium chairman is **Gene Davies, AA6NP**. Tel. 213/662-2820 (home); 213/937-7942 (work.)

- **Tony Smith, G4FAI** of London, England, writes that our original report on the **new UK Novice class** did not make it clear that there are actually two Novice classes in Great Britain. The Class B Novice is codeless with limited frequencies allocated from 50 MHz up; while Class A requires a 5 wpm Morse test and allows some spectrum on h.f. as well as VHF. Tony said that 153 out of 185 applicants - or 83% - taking the Novice RAE (radio amateurs examination) passed the test given in June by the City and Guilds of London Institute.



## ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES TO PART 97

The FCC has issued an Order, released Aug. 12, 1991 (DA 91-946) changing some references in Part §97 to the amateur frequency table.

According to the FCC, the line entry for the 1.25 meter band in the frequency table in 97.301(a) incorrectly references paragraph (b). In that line entry, under the column headed "Sharing requirements," the reference should be to paragraphs (a) and (e) of Section §97.303. *[Editors Note: We believe it should be (a) only since (e) refers to a co-primary allocation between 222 and 225 MHz which is incorrect. The U.S. Amateur Service now has exclusive access to this spectrum.]*

The line entry for the 23 cm band in the frequency table in §97.301(a) incorrectly references paragraph (j). It should be paragraphs (h) and (i) only of §97.303.

The line entry for the 1.2 cm band in the frequency table in §97.301(a) incorrectly references paragraph (i). It should be changed to paragraph (h) of Section §97.303.

Section §97.303(i) has been amended as follows:

"(i) In the 1240-1260 MHz segment, no amateur station shall cause harmful interference to, nor is protected from interference due to the operation of, stations in the radionavigation-satellite service, the aeronautical radionavigation service, or the radiolocation service."

Corrections to Part 97 are effective Sept. 30, 1991.

## FCC REJECTS PELTS: WHAT NOW?

*Back to smoke signals and balloons?*

On August 12 the FCC released the full *Memorandum Opinion & Order* rejecting the *Personal Emergency Locator Transmitter Service* (PELTS, PR Docket 89-599). PELTS would be a portable radio system for use in the outdoors.

The FCC proposed to create PELTS in response to a petition filed by *Kenneth Seymour/KA7OSM*, a cellular telephone engineer in Beaverton, OR. He wanted to provide persons in remote areas a means to alert others of an emergency situation and to help search and rescue personnel locate those in distress. His idea was to modify the 70 MHz *Radio Control Radio Service* rules to accommodate this need.

In its December 12, 1989 *Notice of Proposed Rule-making (NPRM)*, the FCC proposed PELTS as an alternative and listed two purposes for PELTS:

1. To provide for centrally-coordinated radio communications capability for use by the general public in remote areas to reduce response time in emergency situations, and;
2. To reduce the illegal use of emergency locator transmitters (ELTs) and emergency position

indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs).

The FCC proposed to use spectrum in the 220-222 MHz band reallocated from the Amateur Radio Service. As a 'straw man' concept, the FCC proposed two channels (frequency pairs) for communications between persons needing assistance and a watch and response center. There were six additional channels, for one-way noncommercial information messages, non-voice emergency alerting and homing, and short-distance simplex (single-frequency voice) communications. The FCC felt that without a corresponding watch and response system, PELTS would be ineffective.

## Comments

Fifty parties filed comments on the proceeding, and eight filed reply comments. Commenters included search-and-rescue (SAR) and Civil Air Patrol organizations, local and state agencies, manufacturers, radio user associations, and individuals.

The FCC's rejection of PELTS was based on commenters' objections to the particular system design that it had proposed.

## Commenters argued that . . .

...the technical requirements of PELTS would make the equipment too expensive for use by the general public. These requirements included the proposed Amplitude Companded Single-Sideband (ACSB) technology and the two-way voice capability. Others argued that ACSB was an inappropriate technology, that digital techniques could reduce cost, or that other channel configurations could be used at a lower cost.

...PELTS would take too much time and money from SAR and government organizations to establish monitoring and direction-finding networks. Others argued that exploiting the synergy between PELTS and other radio services could make monitoring cheaper and more effective. For example, amateur and REACT groups could participate in monitoring and DF. ...radio coverage in mountainous areas would be difficult. Others argued that voice and/or digipeater systems would improve coverage.

...PELTS might hinder implementation of COSPAS/SARSAT technology. Others argued that development of COSPAS/SARSAT for consumer use has been an extensive flop and that the inability of that system to serve land-based individuals is well-established.

...PELTS would expose SAR organizations to liability exposure. Others argued that liability exposure



was inherent in the FCC's unrealistic licensing scheme. The FCC would require users to rent PELTS "service" from SAR organizations even though repeater service wasn't allowed.

...PELTS would become a general recreational communications medium and it would become filled with spurious transmissions and false alarms. Others argued that only 'smart radios' based on digital technology could avoid enforcement problems from widespread public use.

## **FCC's Conclusion**

"Based on the comments it does not appear that a watch and response system so critical to the success of PELTS will materialize. Further, this lack of support to promote and develop the technology for PELTS would result in uneven usage and a lack of uniformity of emergency communications service...."

"The unsettled nature of the liability question and the legal trend of pursuing large damage suits would likely preclude knowledgeable search and rescue individuals and organizations from participating in PELTS..."

"We have reviewed these comments carefully and seriously evaluated all the specific suggestions. After weighing the merits, however, we believe that at this time PELTS would not adequately meet the public's needs for emergency communications in remote areas nor assist search and rescue personnel in locating individuals in distress. Therefore, we are terminating this proceeding and return the frequencies to the *Land Mobile Radio Service*. We will continue to look to the Interagency Committee on Search and Rescue [ICSAR] for guidance on the matter of personal locating beacons [PLBs]."

The FCC's decision leaves unresolved the future of the "experimental" Mountain Signal concept used at Mt. Hood in Oregon. Mountain Signal users rent the small transmitters from outdoor outfitter merchants. The FCC never issued this system permanent rules, frequencies or regular license.

There is no radio service for personal locating beacons in the U.S. Mountain Signal will apparently operate in perpetual limbo and the system will not be legal for general deployment across the country.

The FCC is looking for PLB guidance to ICSAR, which has already noted that other than CB and low-power Part 15 products, "...there are no other electronic alerting options available to the general public. Instead, participants in recreational activities in remote areas have had to rely on a variety of alerting devices such as smoke flares, strobe lights, signal mirrors and balloons." The committee's working group recom-

mended that the U.S. "...remain ahead of the public's demand for personal locating beacons."

We suspect that PELTS went kaput because of inadequate preparation before issuing this NPRM. Perhaps the FCC should have done more homework with SAR groups before designing the PELTS proposal. Even the national SAR association seemed unaware of PELTS until we asked them their opinion of it. They officially disapproved of PELTS in later comments to the FCC.

Most commenters focused their ire on the FCC's strawman concept instead of offering other alternatives. There was a general concern that the FCC might impose an overdesigned PELTS system on volunteer SAR organizations.

## **Radio alternatives**

The tragedy of these events is that more lives could be saved if some effective radio service was available. Existing emergency locator transmitters are illegal for general consumer use on land.

Outdoor recreation enthusiasts and expeditioners could become licensed radio amateurs. Of course, the amateur frequencies are not available for business communications and could not be used for the regular business affairs of an expedition. But in emergencies, with the wide distribution of repeaters and hams monitoring various VHF and UHF frequencies, Amateur Radio should be able to make a contribution.

The General Mobile Radio Service could also be good for outdoor emergency communications. There is less limitation on business communications. No examination is required, but the license application form is complex and usually requires expert help to complete properly.

The recently deregulated Part 15 brings opportunities to develop low-power devices that could be used for wilderness alerting. Repeaters are now permitted in Part 15 and of course no FCC license is required. FCC certification may be required if devices are marketed.

The amount of spectrum available for Part 15 devices is staggering as long as they keep to low power levels. Higher levels, up to 1 W, are available for spread-spectrum devices in the 902, 2400 and 5700 MHz bands.

The ultimate personal locating beacon will use Low-Earth Orbiting (LEO) satellites. The FCC is now considering such a data-only (no voice) system for commercial operation. An experimental Low-Earth Orbiting satellite, in preparation for a full commercial system, was launched in mid-July but the satellite is not working. A replacement mission is likely.